

## **Sweetening the deal**

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Ridership on the Utah Transit Authority's new FrontRunner commuter trains appears to be benefitting from business owners who are subsidizing their employees' tickets.

Several Davis County residents on one recent leg of their commute said a big factor in their decision to hop the train was reimbursements by their employers.

"It saves me a ton of money," said Angie Larsen, a Layton resident who works for ARUP in Salt Lake City. She said the combination of saving on gas, avoiding sporadic gridlock on Interstate 15 and her employer's subsidization of her ticket makes riding the Frontrunner an easy choice - even though on most days it adds a bit to her commuting time.

"I was always planning on trying it," Larsen said. "And after I did, I found it was easier than driving. It's more relaxing."

The Utah Transit Authority reports nearly 6,000 people are riding the FrontRunner every day - many from stations in Davis County to their workplaces in Salt Lake County. It's unknown how many employers are reimbursing their workers for their commuting tickets - an action the UTA and some business groups are encouraging to reduce traffic, decrease pollution and help employees during times of high gas prices.

Jacque Gallegos figures she's saving about \$400 a month by taking the FrontRunner from her home in Syracuse to downtown Salt Lake City, where she works for the federal defenders office.

With gas prices running about \$4 per gallon, she said, she might consider taking the train even if her employer wasn't paying for her \$120 monthly ticket.

But with the subsidy, she said, it's an easy decision.

And Steve Newman agrees. A Syracuse attorney, who works in Salt Lake City, said his firm reimburses him for much of his Frontrunner pass. Plus, he noted, he can work on the train - so the extra 20 minutes a day it usually takes to use the train over his car doesn't bother him.